

## **To be reduced to rubble and forgotten?**

Part of the campaign by the National Trust and the WA Historical society to preserve the former Pensioner Barracks in 1961. (SLWA PR8509/20)

### **THE ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS**

1. QUESTION: What is meant by the "old" Barracks?

ANSWER: It is not the clutter of buildings now at the top of St. George's Terrace. The original Pensioners' Barracks consists of the archway, the towers and equal sized wings containing five windows on either side. This is the historic building the National Trust, the Historical Society and many lovers of Perth wish to preserve. At least the towers and the archway should be preserved as a Memorial Great Gate to Parliament House, through which official processions might one day pass.

2. QUESTION: Is it NECESSARY to demolish the Barracks for today's Traffic?

ANSWER: No. Under the Stephenson-Hepburn plan the northern switch road from the Narrows Bridge is planned to pass BEHIND it. The Main Roads Department proposes a minor loop road passing over the Barracks site. A modification of this plan is possible, leaving the historic portion standing on its original site.

3. QUESTION: Has an irrevocable decision to raze it been made?

ANSWER: The National Trust and the Historical Society accept the assurance of the Premier (Mr. Brand), given to a recent deputation from both bodies, that he will have the whole question reviewed. There had been earlier Government announcements that the Barracks would be razed in 1964.

4. QUESTION: Are there any echoes in Parliament House of voices in defence of the Barracks?

ANSWER: Yes. When completion of Parliament House was considered in 1927 in preparation for the State's centenary in 1929, the then Premier (Mr. P. Collier) insisted that the extensions should be done "without reference to the existence of the Barracks" and said that he saw 'no reason why any scheme for the completion of the building should necessarily imply the removal of the Barracks.' The Leader of the Opposition (Sir James Mitchell) said he was determined to preserve as many as possible of the State's historic buildings. The President of the Legislative Council (Sir John Kirwan) said "the completion of Parliament House was a necessary work to be considered entirely apart from any question of what would eventually be done for the Barracks. With many people there had grown up a strong feeling of attachment to the old buildings and on the erection of the remaining part of Parliament House the Barracks might be fitted into a general scheme and utilised as an historic gateway in the approach to the building on the hill."

5. QUESTION: Will my opinion count?

ANSWER: We can place your opinion before the Premier. We believe the opinions of citizens are always considered if only they are expressed. That is why a means of expressing your opinion is provided in a petition being circulated by the Historical Society.

6. QUESTION: Tell me the story of the Barracks.

ANSWER: The Barracks symbolises the aid given by the British Government to this colony at the most critical time in its history, and the end of stationing regular British troops here for our defence. It was decided in 1862 to withdraw the regular British military forces which had protected the colony since 1829 and to give that task to a Pensioner Guard for which the Barracks was to be built. To provide a guard for convicts under transport from England, British regular troops soon due for demobilisation were offered the chance of settling in the colony provided they guarded convicts on the voyage and, after reaching Fremantle, until the arrival of the next transport. These troops were called the Enrolled Pensioner Force.

7. QUESTION: After that decision what happened?

ANSWER: The Chief Secretary of State for the Colonies (the Duke of Newcastle) agreed to the provision of large permanent barracks in Perth and that the cost (£6,710) should be paid for in equal shares from Imperial military and local Government funds.

8. QUESTION: How was the Barracks used?

ANSWER: Completed in 1866, it was occupied by the Enrolled Pensioner Force until 1878, when that unit was disbanded. However, some men were retained to form a military guard, known as the Enrolled Guard, which was disbanded in April, 1887. When in 1878 the building passed from the British Government to the colonial authorities, the old pensioners and their families were not evicted but continued to live in the two wings flanking the central tower and archway.

9. QUESTION: So the Barracks may be regarded as a monument to these soldier-settlers?

ANSWER: Yes. They were our only defence force at the time. They were also responsible for maintaining law and order in our city. Their descendants have played a valuable part in our development. They deserve their monument.

10. QUESTION: What was its later history?

ANSWER: The centre portion was used by the High School (now Hale School) as classrooms until 1884. By the end of 1904 the last of the old pensioners were transferred elsewhere and the whole building was adapted for use by the Public Works Department, which had moved in gradually from 1900 to 1903.

11. QUESTION: Their work is quite a part of our history too, isn't it?

ANSWER: Millions of pounds spent in the making of W.A. were on plans laid in the Barracks, so it is doubly historic. From the guard for convicts who built some of our first roads to the free men who designed schools, water systems, hospitals and modern amenities, it has housed people who made our State.

12. QUESTION: Who designed it?

ANSWER: The designs were signed by G. M. Grain, Captain, Royal Engineers, and James Manning, Superintendent of Public Works, Western Australia. James Brittain, builder and contractor, whose brickworks were on the present Queen's Gardens site in East Perth, and Alexander Halliday, carpenter, were engaged on the building with their workmen.

13. QUESTION: Has it any architectural value today?

ANSWER: Certainly. We may now like or dislike the style. but there is no doubt about its value in the history of local architecture. It is an excellent example of the 19th century Gothic Revival typical of the mid-19th century. Many competent visiting authorities, including the Hon. Lionel Brett and Denis Winston, have praised it and said that Perth was lucky to have an historic and architecturally important building in a place where everyone can see it.

14. QUESTION: What about those checker-board bricks?

ANSWER: That is Flemish bond brickwork which produced a solid wall of considerable thickness and remarkable strength. The beautifully-coloured bricks were hand-made in the old wood-burning kilns where the lily ponds of Queen's Gardens stand today. Patterns were subtly woven into this mellowed brickwork to enrich the wall surface and to stress the basic lines of the building's design. This decorated brickwork marks other buildings of the colonial period such as Perth Town Hall, Government House, the Cloisters, and the cemetery chapel of St. Bartholomew's at East Perth. Perth is the only capital city in Australia with a good group of such colonial buildings easily seen by tourists or by those who like to feel the good, strong roots of our culture.